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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9276  
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE  
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2182  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 5650  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 9250  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6829  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 4631  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2626  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 000469

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

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SUBJECT: BURMA: STATE MEDIA IMPLIES A REGIME REBUFF OF  
U.S. OFFER

Classified By: Charge d'Affairs Larry Dinger for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. The state-controlled "New Light of Myanmar" newspaper (NLM) has commented on Secretary Clinton's July 22 call to release Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK). Two recent op-eds under pseudonyms have emphasized GOB past themes: that the ASSK case is an internal, domestic matter; that outsiders must not interfere in internal affairs; and that U.S. bases in Asia are a threat to the region. The articles suggest the trial will continue under the regime's rules regardless of any misgivings the international community may harbor. End summary.

No One is Above the Law  
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¶2. (SBU) On the sidelines of the July 22-23 ASEAN meeting in Phuket, Thailand, Secretary Clinton urged the Burmese regime to release ASSK, thereby opening opportunities for the U.S.-Burma relationship, including renewed investment by U.S. firms. In a July 24 op-ed under a pseudonym (a common GOB device for conveying regime views), the author claims that continued requests and expectations for ASSK's release suggest she is "above the law." The article argues that ASSK, like any offender, broke the law and must face the consequences of her actions. Her case is solely the concern of the court, and "the court will hand down a reasonable term to her if she is found guilty, and it will release her if she is found not guilty." The author claims that the regime did not want to prosecute ASSK but, as with any criminal, it was forced to take action.

Paranoia Reigns Supreme  
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¶3. (SBU) A more strongly-worded op-ed in the July 26 edition of the NLM directly addresses Secretary Clinton's remarks, calling the international community's demands for the release of ASSK and all political prisoners to ensure a free and fair election "unreasonable." The author claims that the main purpose for demanding ASSK's release is that ASSK is the kind of person "who could dance to their (U.S. and Western powers') tune." The author adds that the power that invaded Iraq is "desperate to interfere in the affairs of and invade a small country like Myanmar.... In fact they are

bullying small countries." The author accuses the U.S. of wielding its influence to manipulate ASEAN and disrupt the unity and cooperation among ASEAN countries.

Comment

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¶4. (C) While an op-ed in the NLM is not a definitive statement of GOB policy, nothing political appears in that newspaper unless the regime intends it to be there. In the past few days, other NLM op-eds have taken equivalent swipes at the EU governments and the UN. One receives the impression that the regime's initial response to recent events, including the ASEAN meetings in Phuket, is to back further into a corner.

DINGER